

BIO OF MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS



Advancement Project is honoring the Honorable Mark Ridley-Thomas, Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, 2nd District, with the Advancing Justice Award in recognition of his work promoting policies and programs throughout L.A. County that aid the struggle for greater equity and opportunity for all.

Since the early 1980s, Mark Ridley-Thomas has been a leader in Los Angeles who has consistently worked to lift up the concerns of marginalized communities and people. First as a high-school teacher, then as head of an important civil rights organization, and then throughout his 20-plus years as an elected official, Ridley-Thomas has been a valuable ally for community-based and advocacy organizations throughout Los Angeles.

A product of Los Angeles' public school system and excellent private colleges, his commitment to this region is profound and shows throughout his career. As executive director of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference of Greater Los Angeles in the 1980s, Ridley-Thomas partnered with organizations serving and advocating for people living in low-income, racially isolated, and distressed pockets of L.A.

Ridley-Thomas was first elected to public office in 1991! After serving 12 years on the L.A. City Council, he then served two terms in the California State Assembly, where he chaired the Democratic Caucus. Following that, he served the 26th District in the California State Senate. His legislative work addressed a broad range of issues with implications for economic and workforce development, health care, public safety, education, budget accountability, consumer protection and civic participation.

He is widely regarded as the foremost advocate of neighborhood participation in government decision-making. By virtue of his founding of the Empowerment Congress, arguably the region's most successful 23-year experiment in neighborhood-based civic engagement, he is considered the founder of the Neighborhood Council movement.

Since 2008, Mark Ridley-Thomas has distinguished himself as a strong advocate for the L.A. County Board of Supervisor 2nd District's nearly 2 million residents. He has promoted the district's interests on a variety of fronts, including transportation, job creation and local hiring, and access to health facilities and services.

Advancement Project is proud to call Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas a trusted friend and ally. Join us in thanking him for Advancing Justice!